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promised interest of expropriated Canal Company stockholders and the already violated right of all vessels to pass through the Suez, Morris scorns, without considering, these arguments. The invasion is judged to have been no more than “the last display of imperialist machismo.”

It may, perhaps, be a sign of the times that members of Eden’s own Tory party made even shriller attacks on his Suez

policy throughout November and December, 1956. The prevalence of this defeatist rhetoric in the press and in the House of Commons not only led to his resignation from the prime minister-ship, but signaled the accelerated retreat of his country from international affairs. “No more neocolonial adventures,” has become for Morris and for many of his countrymen the justification for a continuing failure of national will. □

## A Valid Defense of the Indefensible

Michael Novak: *The Guns of Lattimer*; Basic Books; New York. *The American Vision: An Essay on the Future of Democratic Capitalism*; American Enterprise Institute; Washington, D.C.

by Christopher Manion

The contemporary reader of Aristotle’s *Politics* might well conclude that the *spoudaios*—the truly free man who possesses intellectual and moral virtues which embody a philosophical habit of mind—is up there with the snail darter on the lists of species most likely to be exterminated in present-day America. And Aristotle might join in the observation that the modern American capitalist, the “man of action” submerged in the day-to-day details and specialties of his business, would not be a likely candidate for a life of philosophical reflection and cultivation of the contemplative intellect, which Aristotle considered indispensable for the life of anyone who would not be a slave. The same analysis would apply to modern politics, a world inhabited by technical whiz-kids and pragmatic empiricists, whose only lapses from mechanism

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*Mr. Manion, a graduate of Notre Dame, is Assistant to the Director of the Rockefeller College Institute.*

occur not in the direction of philosophical reflection, but of romantic wallowing in ideological swamps already littered with the fossils of those who have gone before them.

So, one would not expect the realms of business or politics to suffer from an excess of philosophers; but neither is there any great demand for them. It is the nature of both activities (given our contemporary circumstances) to eschew genuinely philosophical reflection, even as they are governed by ideas—or, perhaps more often, intellectual confusion.

In the past, Michael Novak’s works have covered the range of politics, religion, culture and sports. His views reflect a thoughtful, refreshing and often controversial mind, and the works considered here are no exception. They portray two very different confrontations, the one at the turn of the century, the other in contemporary America, and their juxtaposition reveals the intimacy of some very correct, even irrefutable observations of our society.

In *The Guns of Lattimer*, Novak examines the clash between a group of immigrant miners in Pennsylvania and a posse of local deputies—and what could be another tired portrayal of “the bosses” exploiting “the masses” becomes a thoughtful analysis of a little-known (and quite ignored) incident in Ameri-

can history. In *The American Vision*, he explores the symbolic language of the anticapitalist lexicon employed by an emerging class of critics whose very success depends on their not being clearly understood. But Novak understands them very well, and his insights into the mind of the anticapitalist “new class,” when seen in the light of his portrayal of the ordeal of his people—for he claims them as his own—who suffered at the hands of the Lattimer mine owners seventy years ago, constitute a most intriguing sociopolitical attitude abounding with hopeful possibilities for American self-understanding.

On Friday afternoon, September 10, 1897, at the Lattimer Mines in Pennsylvania’s coal country, a posse fired on unarmed miners who were marching to spread support of their strike. Nineteen men were killed, and a sham trial acquitted the sheriff and the members of the posse who had done the killing. Though its proportions qualify it as a tragedy worthy of mention in American history, it has been buried among the footnotes or deemed unsuitable material. Michael Novak, himself a child of Slavic immigrants, tripped upon this “hole in history” and pursued an ambitious program of research to fill it. Most scholars knew little of the Slavic tongue in those days, he explains, and the dead were all “foreigners,” many of them still foreign subjects. They spoke little or no English, and were a continual irritant in the more established WASP communities which surrounded the coal fields. “I want my children to have a history,” writes Novak. “Though not a historian, I found a gap in history. There was nothing to do but fill the gap myself.”

The world abounds with propaganda deploring exploited workers and the inhumanity of bosses; but Novak does not embrace that theme. Instead, he presents a piece of documented fiction which explores the full texture of the life—for it was by no means a mere existence—of the immigrant Slavic miners, the immigrant Irish who had

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been there a generation longer, and the established society whose roots were over 200 years old.

Ben Sakmar, the fictional miner whose steps we follow around the periphery of the tragedy, bears the sobriquet of Professor Novak's maternal grandfather; and throughout the book we see the escalating series of events through the eyes of the miners, the sheriff, and the townspeople, some of whom would later be among those in the posse. In each case the simple reasoning—and the simple human failings—seems so clear that one wonders how this was allowed to happen. At the same time we see how the miners, with an American flag at the head of their column, expected the surrounding deputies to understand the peaceful, even progressive intentions of the march; but the deputies, urged on by wary mine owners and some trigger-happy bigotries, saw only a rabble of "Hunkies" whose approach menaced property and human safety.

The Lattimer story does not take long to tell; and in reading it again one looks for the telltale signals which might point the finger at one group or another—"guilty!" Instead, we see through the participants' eyes, and no further than they could see; and Novak does not try to fill the gaps with ideological ballast. He explains that he wants to make this reconstruction "a present to the American people"—we receive as a present a part of our past. And indeed we find there "a closer connection between the many suffering peoples of America than we are usually conscious of."

By insisting that we consider the cultural and religious background of Ben Sakmar's people, as well as the frame of mind of the established WASP community in northeastern Pennsylvania, Novak persuasively argues that the Lattimer incident must be placed in a context much larger than that of mere economics or class conflict. In his painstaking inquiry into the events which preceded the strike and the cultural realities surrounding it, he portrays a

group of miners who love America, who prefer the capitalism of the Pennsylvania coalfields to the penury and autocracy which they had left behind in Eastern Europe; and an unexpected inference that, for all its faults—for all the Lattimers—capitalism just might be the best possible socioeconomic system. And in the second work we consider here, *The American Vision*, Novak brings his powers of observation to bear witness in defense of American democratic capitalism, presently waging a valiant battle to defend itself in a struggle for survival.

Such a military metaphor seems permissible here, for American capitalism today finds itself under attack from a host of adversaries; and the battle is one of symbols, of ideological missiles hurled by visionaries whose territory, idealistic socialism, is not threatened in return—because it does not exist. Present-day "socialist" regimes are never quite what the visionaries had in mind. And yet, we see no others. And that is part of the problem.

Since before Adam Smith even put pen to paper, social justice, processed into utopian systemic concepts, has been the pipe dream of revolutionary reformers throughout the world. And since classical times, *superbia vitae* has been recognized as a potentially tyrannical element in the order of the soul as well as the social order. The egalitarian dream combines this "spiritual concupiscence" with a romantic inclination of the will to form an ideology so appealing that it has emerged unscathed from hundreds of years of history which unanimously contradict it. And Michael Novak points to the intellectual character of this appeal of collectivism, and the decidedly anti-intellectual *praxis* of American capitalism, as the determinants in the contemporary struggle for persuasion in American democracy. For, while democracy has never been known to survive without capitalism, the greatest danger to capitalism in contemporary America is posed by the war of ideas being waged in the name of "democracy"

against the American business community.

Only in a post-Cartesian world could the notion survive that an economic system could flourish regardless of the intellectual and cultural conditions prevailing in society. Yet, "the business of business is business," and American capitalism has been minding the store while the intellectuals—basking in the material plenty provided by the capitalists—have leveled their ideological cannons and taken aim. Novak explains:

"In the sphere of ideology and ideas, among the artists and intellectuals, as well as among the masses of the world's people, the advantages at present seem clearly to belong to the opponents of democratic capitalism. To a remarkable extent, this seems to be true among many intellectuals within the civilization of democratic capitalism itself."

Long ago Aristotle pointed out that a certain level of wealth was necessary for political activity; capitalism has provided that level of wealth for the majority of Americans (and it is probably true that the very poor in the United States are *not* politically active, but merely *manipulated* by the "poverty activists" of the "new class" in and out of government, whose income level is well above the national average). But Professor Novak points to a fatal flaw in the "rampant individualism" which motivates—and is often motivated by—American capitalism: too often, the bonds of civility, religion, honor and duty are broken to give free rein to the normlessness presented as freedom; and dominant passions can often stray beyond the bounds of "doing your own thing" to run the range of human lusts, including the inclination (seen by Augustine 1500 years ago) of equals to lust for power over their fellow men.

Very well: the battle in a democracy is one of persuasion—not, perhaps, of the majority, but of the key decision-makers in government. And to this end

the foes of American capitalism, the "new class" of intellectuals whose expertise is control, not production, and whose sympathies lie with the statist mentality, prevail upon officials to remove first one, then another, freedom from the realm of individual action to the realm of government control. Especially by means of the communications media and the "knowledge industry," Americans are encouraged to allow their acquisitive passions—the easiest to please—to win the struggle against their better judgment, which is usually too demanding a disciplinarian anyway.

The soul of America writ small! And as first one passion, then another, gives the new Leviathan his way, American business is slowly squeezed to inactivity, and the golden eggs are increasingly hard to come by.

Novak's prescription will not surprise the regular readers of the *Chronicles of Culture*. American business must mount an intellectual offensive against the glittering visions of the egalitarian romantics—visions that often serve to sugar-coat raw lust for power. Socialism is no longer a mere vision: it is a reality in several corners of the world, and when measured up against this reality, the glittering vision falls to pieces. If liberty precedes socialism, it cannot survive it. In no existing socialist regime have liberty and democracy persevered. But capitalism cannot develop and flourish unless liberty is preserved. Capitalism merely reflects the economic dimension of liberty in our culture. It depends on liberty, and nurtures it as well: all the free decisions which occur in the marketplace contribute to a responsible habit of mind by which the people become accustomed to acting as free men. But in our culture this reality has been taken for granted but never properly understood. So, Novak concludes,

"The task before business leaders, political leaders, and humanists in the

present generation, clearly, is to struggle creatively to bring about that articulation, in profound and original patrimony of free societies. Liberty is our culture's most cherished value. It does not defend itself. It must always be rewon anew. The new class has, perhaps unwittingly, brought us the great blessing of living in a generation that must, for its survival, think freshly and deeply and lastingly. The competition of classes, like the competition of ideas, is the healthy dynamism our society is designed to generate. All benefit by such competition."

## Struggling for One's Own Child's Mind

Connaught Coyne Marshner: *Blackboard Tyranny*; Arlington House; New Rochelle, New York.

by Mahmood Butt

Books on the American educational system have been written from a variety of ideological perspectives, yet there is one common element in all of them. They are "angry books" describing in detail the ills of the compulsory public schooling. There is a general consensus, whether it is Ivan Illich's *Deschooling*

The journey of Ben Sakmar from Lattimer to Michael Novak at the American Enterprise Institute invites some reflection. The American system, which produced a heinous attack on unarmed miners at the turn of the century, finds an articulate and persuasive defender in the writer who descends from the victims, whose love for those defenseless and wronged immigrants stirred him to years of effort to "fill in the gap" in history—for his people, for his country. And then, the efforts to resurrect and defend his country. A labor of love, indeed. □

Hence the concluding thesis of Mrs. Marshner in her book *Blackboard Tyranny* is once again that "public education as it now exists is not only a failure but a nuisance and a threat to the continuance of an ordered society." What distinguishes Mrs. Marshner from many others is her belief that the American system of education is not responding to the needs of the American public, and has come to be arbitrarily controlled by bureaucratic educationists and their allies in the state and federal governments. This alliance has destroyed

"Libraries should have books offering divergent views, but taxpayers deserve better than vigilante manuals filled with sweeping generalizations, half-truths, and hysterical extremism."

—*Library Journal*

*Society*, Max Rafferty's *Suffer Little Children*, or Arthur Bestor's *Educational Wastelands*, that American education has failed to live up to its promise. Schools are not performing their basic task of producing literate, moral and intellectually competent young adults.

Dr. Butt is Chairman of the Education Department of Rockford College.

the traditional local control and sponsorship of education to such an extent that parents and taxpayers have been effectively eliminated from educational decision-making. Parents and taxpayers should embark upon a concerted program of political activism to regain their right to "decide the direction of [their] children's lives," the author suggests.

Her harshest criticism is heaped on